

Appl. No. : 09/445,945
Filed : December 20, 1999

12/30/99
41. The filling connection according to Claim 38, wherein the discharge connection and the filling union each open into one of a separate and a common through bore in the valve body.

42. The filling connection according to Claim 38, wherein the discharge connection and filling union are formed in one piece with the valve body.

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43. The filling connection according to Claim 38, wherein the filling union has an outer annular groove for engagement of a filling coupling.

44. The filling connection according to Claim 38, wherein at least one valve is fitted in the filling union and adapted to block gas flow in the discharge direction.

45. The filling connection according to Claim 38, wherein the filling union has the same outer dimensions and external shape as the discharge connection.

REMARKS

The July 25, 2000 Office Action was based on Claims 15-29. After entry of these amendments, Claims 15-23, 25, 26, 29 and 30-45 are pending. The Examiner rejected Claims 15-19 and 20 as being anticipated by the cited references and Claims 19 and 21-29 as being obvious over the cited references. Applicants have amended the claims to overcome these rejections. In view of the amendments and the following comments, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of the claims as amended.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102(b)

The Examiner rejected **Claims 15-17 and 20** under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Krechel. The Examiner also rejected **Claim 18** under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Krechel in view of Sakai. Independent **Claim 15** has been amended by adding features of Claim 24 to further define that the filling union has a company/user specific form for coding that is matched to the corresponding filling coupling being used. Claim 24 has been cancelled. Applicants respectfully submit that **Claim 15** as amended is not anticipated by the cited references for the reasons set forth hereinafter.

The filling connection of **Claim 15** as amended has, among others, a filling union that has a company/user specific form for coding matched to a corresponding filling coupling. The filling union extends along the longitudinal axis of the filling unit. An embodiment of the filling connection is shown in Figure 1 of the present application.

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Krechel discloses a manifold fitting for an air tank. The elongate body of the manifold fitting has a threaded portion (7) for attachment to the air tank and an end portion (9) having an unthreaded tubular shape with an even surface (e.g., Figures 1, 4). The end portion (9) has an internal filler check valve (11). The filler check valve (11) for filling the air tank is a "conventional well-known" type used for inflating tires (col. 2, lines 18-24). The unthreaded tubular shape of the end portion (9) is not a filling union as defined in Claim 15 as amended because Krechel's end portion (9) is not coded. Krechel, therefore, fails to disclose a filling union that has a company/user specific form for coding that is matched to a corresponding filling coupling.

The Examiner cited Sakai against **Claim 18** because Sakai discloses a check valve. Applicants submit, however, that Sakai's valve assembly has a structure that is substantially different from the structure of the filling connection as defined in **Claim 15** as amended.

Applicants submit that **Claim 15** as amended is not anticipated by Krechel. **Claims 16-23, 26, 25, 29**, which depend from **Claim 15** as amended, are therefore also not anticipated by Krechel for the same reasons recited with respect to **Claim 15** as amended and because of the additional features of **Claims 16-23, 25, 26, 29**.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103

The Examiner rejected **Claims 19 and 21-29** under 35 U.S.C. §103 as being unpatentable over Krechel. **Claims 19 and 21-29** depend from **Claim 15** as amended, which is not anticipated by the cited references for the above reasons. Applicants respectfully submit that **Claim 15** as amended is not obvious in view of the cited references and that therefore any dependent claims is patentable in view of the cited prior art.

In view of the above analysis of Krechel, Applicants submits that Krechel fails to disclose or suggest a filling connection as defined in **Claim 15** as amended. In fact, Krechel teaches away from the present invention because Krechel's end portion (9) has an unthreaded tubular shape with an even surface, instead of a filling union that has a company/user specific form for coding. There is no suggestion in Krechel that would motivate one of ordinary skill in the art to change the tubular shape of the end portion (9).

The applicants also note that in the rejection of Claims 19 and 21-29, the Examiner states that the design features of these claims are "generally well known" or "obvious design

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variations.” The applicant disagrees. In addition to their dependence from Claim 15, the applicants respectfully submit that the features of these claims are not properly characterized as “generally well known,” and that a *prima facie* case of obviousness of these claims as originally submitted has not been made out. Should the Examiner continue to base a rejection on this assertion, the applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner provide a reference in support of his position.

In view of these arguments, Applicants respectfully submit that the subject matter of **Claim 15** as amended is not obvious over Krechel. **Claims 15-23, 25, 26, 29** are therefore patentable in view of the cited reference and Applicant respectfully requests allowance of these claims.

New Claims

New **Claims 30-45** have been added to further define filling connection in accordance with the present invention. New **Claim 30** is based on **Claims 15 and 27** and defines the filling union as extending along a longitudinal axis of the filling union and as being adapted to be coupled to a filling station capable of being automated. New **Claim 42** is based on **Claims 15 and 28** and defines the filling union as extending along a longitudinal axis of the filling union and as being adapted to be coupled to a multiple filling coupling adapted for simultaneous filling of a plurality of gas cylinders.

New Claims 30 and 42, and therefrom depending claims, are believed to be patentable in view of the cited references because Krechel fails to disclose or to suggest filling union that is adapted to be coupled to a filling station capable of being automated; or that is adapted for simultaneous filling of a plurality of gas cylinders. As discussed above, Krechel teaches a manifold fitting that has an end portion (9) having an unthreaded tubular shape with an even surface. Krechel fails to provide any suggestion for modifying the end portion.

In view of these arguments, Applicants respectfully submit that the subject matter of new **Claims 30-45** is patentable in view of the cited references. Applicants respectfully request allowance of these claims.

Conclusion:

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Applicants have endeavored to address all of the Examiner's concerns as expressed in the outstanding Office Action. Accordingly, amendments to the claims, the reasons therefor, and arguments in support of the patentability of the pending claim set are presented above. Any claim amendments which are not specifically discussed in the above remarks are made in order to improve the clarity of claim language, to correct grammatical mistakes or ambiguities, and to otherwise improve the capacity of the claims to particularly and distinctly point out the invention to those of skill in the art. In light of the above amendments and remarks, reconsideration and withdrawal of the outstanding rejections is specifically requested. If the Examiner finds any remaining impediment to the prompt allowance of these claims that could be clarified with a telephone conference, the Examiner is respectfully requested to initiate the same with the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,

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